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An NRC Mining Company Report

Comparisons of Subscribers and Non-Subscribers

By Edna Einsiedel

HIGHLIGHTS: This report on subscribers and non-subscribers is based on 48 proprietary studies in 34 different markets across the United States and Canada. These studies show that subscribers more frequently cite the newspaper as their primary source of news and, compared to non-subscribers, tend to have more positive images of the newspaper. There is some evidence that subscribers have a stronger orientation to the print media. Even in their use of radio and television, subscribers have a stronger orientation to news than do non-subscribers. Other data is presented on single copy buyers and on the demographics, political interest and content preferences of subscribers and non-subscribers.

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American Newspaper Publishers Association
The Newspaper Center, Box 17407, Dulles International Airport, Washington, D.C. 20041
William C. Marcil, Chairman and President
Jerry W. Friedheim, Executive Vice President
Robert C. Achorn, Chairman, Readership and Marketing Committee
Maxwell E. McCombs, Director, ANPA News Research Center

NRC Mining Company

The data files on most newspaper research operations are an untapped gold mine of information about newspaper readership. The purpose of the NRC Mining Company is to refine and extract this valuable information from accumulated ore and make it available to editors, publishers and newspaper researchers.

Its been said that many of the empty categories in ANPA's extensive review of the readership research completed over the past 25 years (ANPA News Research Reports No. 3 and No. 22) could be filed with information from existing research data—if only someone had the time to hunt it down and to analyze it.

But in the press of everyday concerns, the data from a study is analyzed to meet the immediate questions at hand and then filed away. For example, a simple survey with 20 questions yields 190 two-way cross-tabulations, far more than typically analyzed or reported.

To remedy this situation, at least in part, the NRC Mining Company is collecting and organizing this research. More than 300 proprietary research reports have been obtained so far.

The NRC Mining Company project was initiated in 1982 as a coordinated effort of the ANPA News Research Center, the Newspaper Readership Council and the Newspaper Research Council.

This summary, comparing subscribers and non-subscribers is the second in a series of literature reviews being prepared from these materials. Another report in preparation will review the research on regular vs. occasional readers.

Comparisons of Subscribers and Non-Subscribers

By Edna Einsiedel

Dr. Einsiedel is an associate professor at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University where she holds a joint appointment in the Newspaper Department and the Communication Research Center. *This study was funded, in part, by the Newspaper Readership Council.*

Subscriptions are an important part of a newspaper's total circulation. In terms of readership, subscribing implies a greater commitment to and interest in newspaper reading as a consequence of having the newspaper in one's home regularly. This is illustrated by the recent finding that "69 percent of all subscribers read a newspaper on all five of the past weekdays (while) less than a fourth of 'yesterday' readers without home delivery have read a newspaper on all five of the last five weekdays."

The family as a social institution has undergone changes that have consequences for newspaper reading in general and newspaper subscribing in particular. As Bogart has observed:

> The more adults there are in a household, the more chances that a newspaper will be bought; the more stable the family structure, the more chances that reading will follow a routine and that a newspaper will be delivered regularly. With more loners and floaters, the sale of newspaper subscriptions becomes more difficult. A regular subscription is less convenient for individuals who lead an irregular existence. They are harder to contact, to sell to, to collect from. They are likely to have a smaller household income than families with more than one breadwinner. Accordingly, the cost of a subscription is a bigger item in their budgets.[1]

Households have been growing at a faster rate than ever and the nature of households has changed dramatically, including more single-person households, fewer children, and more children in single-parent families. These factors, among others, have had an influence on newspaper readership.

This report is about newspaper subscribing: what kinds of people subscribe to a newspaper and why. It is based on an analysis of market data in 34 different markets around the country.

Summary of Findings

- While the demographic patterns vary somewhat from market to market, subscribers tend to be older, to have higher incomes, more education and white collar jobs, own their homes, and to have resided in the community for a longer time than non-subscribers.

- Subscribers more frequently cite the newspaper as their primary source of news and, compared to non-subscribers, tend to have more positive images of the newspaper.

- There is some evidence that newspaper subscribers have a stronger orientation to the print media.

- Even in their use of radio and television subscribers have a stronger orientation to news than do non-subscribers.

- While there are some scattered differences in the content preferences of subscribers and non-subscribers, the primary finding across markets is that subscribers are more interested in almost every type of newspaper content.

- Part of the reason why some people subscribe to a daily newspaper while others do not lies in their interest and participation in politics, including their belief that they have a civic obligation to keep up with the news.

- Presence of a newspaper in the home as a child and use of a newspaper in the classroom both are related to higher levels of subscribing as an adult. These relationships are especially true among non-whites.

- Scattered market reports indicate that regular single copy buyers are likely to cite delivery problems as a reason for not subscribing. Specialized interest in only certain newspaper content, or a particular day of the week, also is frequently cited by single copy buyers.

Table 1

Media Use of Subscribers and Non-Subscribers (Northeastern Market)

	Subscribers (n=372)	Non-Subscribers (n=100)
I. Frequency of Watching Early Local TV News*		
3 Days or less/week	47%	64%
4-7 Days	53%	36%
II. Number of Magazines Subscribed to*		
None	27%	46%
One or More	73%	54%
III. Cable Subscriber*		
No	34.9%	55.7%
Yes	65.1%	44.3%

*Differences significant at $p < .05$

Nature of the Data

The nature of the data used for this report varied widely, from single-page summaries of survey results to detailed computer print-outs of tabulations and cross-tabulations.

Very few market reports made use of or reported statistical tests. When probability samples are used, these tests can be quite useful in determining whether numerical differences between subscribers and non-subscribers are real—that is, within a certain range, these differences would be what we would find if we had the opportunity to talk to *all* the subscribers and *all* the non-subscribers in the given market—or whether these differences could have occurred merely by chance.

Questions were not always included in the various reports, although in some instances the questions could be inferred from the data. In general, how a question is asked affects the nature and distribution of responses, so their inclusion is always helpful in evaluating the data.

Comparisons across markets also were restricted by differences in measures used or questions asked. For instance, subscribers and non-subscribers were compared in a few markets on exposure to other media or frequency of use of other media. Our ability to compare these results from one market to another is limited, however, if one market uses the question "How many days in the last week did you watch network TV news?" and another asks "How many days of the week on average do you watch television news?" while another uses the question "How frequently do you watch television news?"

Table 2

Positive Newspaper Images in a Southern Market

Question: "People have many different feelings about newspapers. We'd like to know how you feel about the ——. Whether or not you read the —— regularly, is it your opinion that it is . . ."

	Total Adults	AM Subscribers	PM Subscribers	Non-Subscribers
Easy to Read	92%	96%	97%	86%
Useful	89%	95%	96%	80%
Accurate	75%	80%	79%	69%
Modern	74%	78%	82%	74%
Fair	74%	78%	80%	68%
Entertaining.....	74%	80%	79%	69%
Inexpensive	68%	68%	62%	70%
Prints Both Sides of Issue	60%	64%	68%	54%
Progressive	43%	45%	51%	38%
Conservative	36%	41%	32%	36%

(n = 520)

Guidelines

(1) While more than 200 reports were available to the NRC Mining Company, less than a fourth dealt directly with subscribers and non-subscribers. In these instances, groups are specifically identified as "subscribers" and "non-subscribers." In a few instances, non-subscribers were identified as non-subscribers to newspaper X. Where it was possible to eliminate those who were non-subscribers to newspaper X, but were subscribers to another daily newspaper, we did so. Where these distinctions were not made, we took at face value the term "non-subscribers" as being applied *to those who do not subscribe to a daily newspaper*. All market reports evaluated for this study were done for daily newspapers and covered the period 1977 to 1982.

(2) In most cases where statistical tests were not reported, a guideline of 10 percent was used in assessing meaningful differences between subscribers and non-subscribers. That is, a difference of roughly 10 percent between figures reported for subscribers and non-subscribers was taken as suggestive of a true difference. This standard was relaxed to about seven percent where sample sizes were at least a thousand. In general, however, where no statistical tests were reported, we tried to look for *patterns* in the differences, rather than relying primarily on absolute differences. Where caveats are necessary, these are pointed out to the reader at various places.

Demographics of Subscribers

Previous studies have tended to show non-subscribers to be less upscale than their subscriber counterparts. A study in Eugene, Oregon[12] showed non-subscribers in that city to be older, blue-collar workers, with lower annual family incomes and lower education. No differences were found on length of residency. In Mansfield, Ohio, the demographics of non-subscribers were essentially similar except that non-subscribers tended to be younger than subscribers.[11] This study was replicated five years later and the same results were found.[2] A study comparing *young* subscribers and non-subscribers found no differences in education, although among these under-35 adults, subscribers were more likely to be married and to have white collar jobs.[13]

A 1978 study by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau based on a national probability sample showed home delivery to be higher among the college educated, high income, those older, professionals and managers, and homeowners.

Grotta and Babbili[9] took subscribers and non-subscribers in a Southeastern market and further categorized both groups into hard-cores and marginals. They found the hard-core subscribers and non-subscribers to be more alike: both groups tended to be older, higher income, home-owners, and long-time residents of the area, whereas marginal subscribers and marginal non-subscribers (or 'potential subscribers') were younger, single, had lower income, and were newer residents.

Examination of various demographic variables in the proprietary research reports made available to the NRC Mining Company reveals:

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Subscribers, Non-Subscribers and Former Subscribers of A.M. Newspaper in Midwestern Market

	Subscribers	Former Subscribers	Non-Subscribers
Sex			
Male	50%	44%	46%
Female	50%	56%	54%
Age			
34 or less	24%	38%	41%
35-54	37%	40%	33%
55+	38%	21%	25%
Education			
High school or less	53%	65%	63%
Some college +	45%	34%	36%
Employment			
Employed	55%	64%	59%
Retired/ Unemployed/ Student/Housewife	45%	36%	41%
Household Size			
1-2	50%	50%	51%
3+	50%	50%	49%
Tenure			
Own	82%	67%	67%
Rent	18%	33%	33%
Residence			
Less than 10 years	16%	14%	19%
10+	84%	86%	81%
Income			
Less than $10,000	12%	9%	19%
$10-$20,000	21%	27%	28%
$20,000 +	47%	39%	33%
Marital Status			
Married	73%	71%	63%
Other	27%	29%	37%

- While males more often tended to be subscribers in the past, more markets today show no difference by sex
- Subscribers still tend to be older than non-subscribers
- Subscribers have higher incomes than non-subscribers
- Subscribers have higher education than non-subscribers
- More subscribers own their own homes
- More subscribers are white
- More subscribers are married
- More subscribers have white-collar jobs
- Subscribers tend to have resided in the community longer

These conclusions are based on 25 market reports which specifically evaluated subscribership and some of the demographic variables described above. Given that these conclusions are based only on markets reporting subscriber-demographic correlations, and are therefore not necessarily representative of newspaper markets in general, they may not apply to a particular market.

Lifestyle

Only a few studies have looked at lifestyle variables differentiating subscribers from non-subscribers. Roby[12] measured sociability characteristics and found subscribers to be more active in their communities. They belonged to more business and professional groups than non-subscribers, while non-subscribers belonged to more social and fraternal groups. This is not surprising considering that the demographics of subscribers in this community showed them to be white-collar workers with higher incomes.

The 1970 Mansfield, Ohio study[11] found non-subscribers to be less community-oriented, more mobile, and slightly less socially involved. Subscribers here were found to be more involved in a wide range of leisure activities than non-subscribers.

Schweitzer[13] looked at young adult subscribers and non-subscribers on such variables as lifestyle, identification with the geographic area, ways of spending leisure time, mobility and identification of public officials. He found no significant differences between the two groups.

Unfortunately, none of the market reports available to the NRC Mining Company utilized any of these variables.

Use of Other Media

Only one study was found which looked at other media used by subscribers and non-subscribers. Schweitzer[15] found young non-subscribers (under age 35 to be significantly more likely than their subscribing counterparts to report television as a primary source of information. But non-subscribers watched less national TV news than subscribers, while no differences were found between the two groups in frequency of viewing local TV news.

New data on other media use by subscribers and non-subscribers were available from five markets across the country. Since the questions asked varied from one market to another, the results will be presented separately.

In a Midwestern market, the only difference between subscribers and non-subscribers (not surprisingly) was that more subscribers were apt to read a newspaper every day than non-subscribers. While both groups were similar in their frequency of television and radio use, slightly more subscribers read magazines every day.

In this market, respondents also were asked which medium was their first, second, third or fourth choice as a news source. The data showed more non-subscribers selecting television as their first choice than subscribers. More subscribers selected newspapers as their first choice. More non-subscribers also were partial to radio as a first choice than subscribers.

In a Northeastern market, subscribers and non-subscribers were compared on their frequency of exposure to both local and network television news, general magazine and newsmagazine subscriptions, and general radio and TV exposure. Subscribers did not differ from non-subscribers in their frequency of television and radio use, nor did they differ in their exposure to network news and number of newsmagazine subscriptions.

However, as Table 1 shows, significant differences were found in the frequency of watching early local TV news, total number of magazines subscribed to, and cable subscriptions, with more subscribers watching early local TV news more often, subscribing to one or more magazines, and subscribing to cable.

In a Southern market, four times as many subscribers as non-subscribers cited the newspaper as the source they used most often for local news (48 percent to 12 percent). On the other hand, 60 percent of non-subscribers cited television as their primary local news source compared to 36 percent of subscribers. Twice as many non-subscribers as subscribers also mentioned radio as the most often used source for local news (24 percent to 12 percent).

Subscribers and non-subscribers in a Southeastern market were compared on their exposure to a local weekly newspaper. Twenty-five percent of subscribers said they had read or looked at a weekly newspaper in the last seven days as compared to only 16 percent of non-subscribers.

In a Canadian market, more subscribers were found to use other print media than non-subscribers. Fourteen percent of subscribers said they received another daily newspaper compared to 10 percent of non-subscribers to the local daily. Similarly, one in four subscribers received a weekly newspaper compared to only 15 percent of non-subscribers.

What do these findings suggest about the media use of subscribers and non-subscribers? While different questions were asked in these five markets, some patterns appear. First, subscribers seem to be more print-oriented than non-subscribers:

(1) They read newspapers more often

(2) They subscribe to more magazines

(3) They are more likely to read another daily newspaper or a weekly newspaper

The second discernible pattern seems to be that while subscribers do not differ from non-subscribers in their broadcast media exposure, the difference lies in their *news* exposure. Subscribers tend more often to choose newspapers as a primary news source, especially for local news. They also tend to watch more local television news than non-subscribers. This is not necessarily contradictory to the other findings that non-subscribers were more likely to cite television or radio as their primary news source than newspapers. While non-subscribers generally attend to the broadcast media more heavily than subscribers, at the same time subscribers attend to news, especially local news, more heavily than non-subscribers.

Content Preferences

Grotta and Babbili[3] segmented subscribers and non-subscribers into hard-cores and marginals. They found that marginal subscribers and non-subscribers exhibited similar higher interest levels for "soft news" items (tips on how to save money, things to do and places to go, food and recipes, etc.). Hard-core non-subscribers were less interested than the other three

segments in all but four types of content: local news, national and world news, local sports news, and national sports news.

New data on differences in content preferences among subscribers and non-subscribers came primarily from four markets, each of which classified content in a slightly different way.

In one market, differences between subscribers and non-subscribers were assessed in terms of interest in local, national and international news. Across all three categories, subscribers showed significantly greater interest than non-subscribers.

In another market, content was categorized according to major sections of the newspaper. Again, a greater number of subscribers regularly read most of the secctions than did non-subscribers, with the exception of comics, want ads, TV schedules, and movies/amusement. It is interesting that, with the exception of the comics section (which generally receives high readership levels across most groups), very specific utilitarian information is provided by the other three sections, and it is in this area that non-subscribers do not differ from subscribers.

And in another market, subscribers' interest in 23 topics was compared with non-subscribers'. Interest across topics was found to be 24 percent higher on average for subscribers than for non-subscribers. Non-subscribers were especially less interested in expert opinions, politics, social news, and certain types of news for homeowners.

Evaluations of Media Performance

In a comparison of subscribers' and non-subscribers' feelings toward newspapers, the data from a Southern market (Table 2) show that on almost all the measures at least 10 percent fewer non-subscribers than subscribers rated newspapers positively. More subscribers to either morning or evening newspapers rated the newspaper higher than non-subscribers on ease of reading, usefulness, accuracy, fairness, balance, entertainment value and progressiveness.

How do newspapers as a news medium rate in comparison to other media? In a Midwestern market, more subscribers rated newspapers as "entertaining," "essential," as well as "worth the time spent" than non-subscribers. Both groups did not differ in rating newspapers as "useful" and "reliable."

In their rating of television and radio, subscribers and non-subscribers did not differ much in rating both media as "entertaining" and "reliable;" and as many in both groups rated television as "essential." However, on this measure, more non-subscribers rated radio as "essential" and "worth the time spent." Not much difference was found between subscribers and non-subscribers in their rating of magazines.

In a Northeastern market, more than 480 respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of newspaper, television, radio and newsmagazine coverage of news generally. On the last three media, subscribers did not differ from non-subscribers. However, significantly more subscribers (two-thirds) said newspaper news coverage was "good," compared to 56 percent of non-subscribers.

In summary, we might conclude that the use of the broadcast media appears to be a factor in the rating of newspapers. Where subscribers rate newspapers higher than radio, TV or magazines as a news medium, newspapers are either rated equally with other media or rated lower in their news coverage by non-subscribers.

Motives for Subscribing

Why do people subscribe to a newspaper? McCombs, Mullins and Weaver[9] found that the three most frequent reasons all had to do with keeping up with what's going on: 71 percent said they wanted to keep up with national and international news; 70 percent said they wanted to keep up with local happenings, and 60 percent mentioned keeping up with state news. Respondents also were asked what they would miss most if they could not get the newspaper. Fifty percent of the respondents mentioned 'the news.'

Stamm, Jackson and Bowen[11] looked at newcomers to the community and found that the more severe the dislocation, it was more likely that the new resident would rely on the newspaper for information on the community, work, home neighborhood and leisure.

Do subscribers and non-subscribers differ in their motives for reading the newspaper? Results from a Far Western market suggest that while subscribers do not differ from non-subscribers in reading the newspaper because it's "fun to read," they differ in their motivation "to keep up," "to understand what's going on," to use the medium in daily living and "to relax." Subscribers were more likely to cite these motives for reading the newspaper than non-subscribers.

Reasons for Stopping

Why do people stop their subscriptions? McCombs, *et. al.*,[5] found delivery problems to be the most frequently mentioned reason (cited by 22 percent, followed by 'went on vacation,' (17 percent) and 'moved' (12 percent).

Nine studies in seven different markets show fairly similar patterns. The major reason appears to be delivery problems. In two markets, the second most frequently mentioned reason for stopping a subscription was "not enough time to read." In three other markets, the second most frequently cited reason was economic: subscribing was said to be too expensive. In one West Coast market, content of the newspaper and lack of time were most frequently mentioned, with delivery problems a close second.

When these results were analyzed by age and income, younger people and women were more likely to cite "no time to read" than older people and males. Respondents 35 and older were more likely to mention delivery problems, while no differences were found between men and women on this item. Men as well as older respondents were more likely to say they no longer subscribed because of the newspaper's content.

An in-depth, qualitative study of 50 recent stops in a Southern market showed that the newspaper itself remained a viable product. That is, about one half said they would "feel lost without the _____" or "The _____ is very important" to them. Other measurements relating to content elicited favorable responses. However, poor service generally cancelled out the favorable ratings. In that market, stops ranged from very recent to long-term former subscribers (four out of 10 had subscribed to the newspaper for 10 years or longer), refuting the notion, at least in this instance, that most stops might come from those with shorter associations with the newspaper.

Table 3 profiles former subscribers along with current subscribers and non-subscribers to a morning newspaper in a Midwestern market. Disregarding the slight differences between the morning and afternoon newspapers, former subscribers appear to be more similar to non-subscribers in some respects than to subscribers. Like non-subscribers, former subscribers tend to be female, younger, have less education, lower income, and are less likely to own a home. The figures show that former subscribers appear to be slightly more upscale than non-subscribers which may suggest why they were likely candidates for newspaper subscribing in the first place.

However, their ties to the newspaper are "weaker," so to speak, given the fact that they tend to have slightly less education and income than subscribers, and tend to rent rather than own a home.

Political Interest

The results from two markets are quite similar and may be summarized simply: subscribers tend to exhibit higher political interest, to be better informed, and to be more active participants in the political system.

As Table 4 shows, in both markets subscribers were more likely to be registered voters and, in the Southeastern market, were more likely to have voted in the past presidential election. In the Northeastern market, subscribers were more likely to be interested in the local mayoral race, to know the correct number of candidates running for mayor (four), and to correctly identify each candidate.

When respondents were asked about their primary source of news on the mayoral race, 56 percent of subscribers mentioned newspapers compared to only 29 percent of non-subscribers. On the other

Table 4

Political Interest Among Subscribers and Non-Subscribers

	Subscribers	Non-Subscribers
I. How much do you think your opinion can count in influencing the activities and policies of *local* government? Would you say . . .		
"Some" to "A lot"	29%	23%
"Little" to "Not at all"	71%	75%
Don't Know	--	2%
Total	100%	100%
N =	(92)	(56)
II. Are you a registered voter?		
Registered voter	86%	52%
Not registered voter	14%	48%
Total	100%	100%
N =	(92)	(56)
III. Did you vote in the 1976 Presidential election?		
Voted	74%	41%
Did not vote	12%	11%
Not registered voter	14%	48%
Total	100%	100%
N =	(92)	(56)
IV. Interest in local election*		
High	56%	37%
Low	44%	63%
Total	100%	100%
N =	(188)	(74)
V. Know correct number of candidates running for mayor*		
Did know	43%	32%
Didn't know	60%	68%
Total	103%	100%
N =	(370)	(108)

*Statistically significant at p .05. Data for sections I-III from Southeastern market; for sections IV and V from Northeastern market.

hand, about two-thirds of non-subscribers (68 percent) mentioned television compared to 38 percent of subscribers who selected this medium.

In the Southeastern market, slightly more subscribers indicated that their "opinions could count in influencing activities and policies of local government."

A Case Study—The News Norm

Does newspaper subscribing result in part from a sense of civic duty to keep informed?

This duty to be informed can be measured by a scale consisting of four statements. Pioneer work on this scale by McCombs and Poindexter[9] indicated that it was a fairly good predictor of newspaper readership.

The four statements comprising this news norm scale are:

1. It is important to be informed about news and current events
2. So many other people follow the news and keep informed about it that it doesn't matter much whether I do
3. A good deal of news about current events isn't important enough to keep informed about
4. We all have a duty to keep ourselves informed about news and current events

Analysis indicates that subscribers are more likely to hold a strong belief in the duty to be informed than non-subscribers, and are more likely to read the newspaper to understand and keep up with the latest events.

Home and School Influences

A 1977 study by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau of a representative sample of over 3,000 adults found childhood exposure to be related to subscribing. Among those who recalled having a newspaper in their homes as a child, two-thirds were current subscribers compared with about half of those who did not have a newspaper at home in their childhood.

Another NAB national survey similarly found that having a newspaper at home as a child and using a newspaper in the classroom are positively related to newspaper subscribing (Table 5). The effects were found to be greater among non-whites than among whites.

Among non-whites, more subscribers were found among those who had the newspaper at home as a child than among those who had not. There were also more subscribers among those who had a newspaper in the classroom than among those who had not.

The effect of having a newspaper at home as well as in the classroom also appears to be cumulative for this group: That is, the greatest number of subscribers were found among those who experienced both situations, while the least number of subscribers were found among those who had neither.

Among whites, on the other hand, having a newspaper in class made a difference on newspaper subscribing only if there was no newspaper exposure at home. If they had a newspaper at home as a child, over two-thirds of whites in the sample were subscribers, regardless of whether they had had a newspaper in class or not. If they had not had a newspaper at home, over three-fifths were subscribers if they had a newspaper in class whereas only 55 percent were subscribers if they did not have a newspaper in class. Thus with whites, newspapers in the classroom appears to have an impact on subscribing only when the respondent did not have the newspaper at home as a child.

Single Copy Buying

Reports from seven separate markets and two national surveys show that the single copy buyer:

- is younger (34 and under)
- is male
- has low income
- lives in a multiple dwelling unit
- belongs to a small household (1 or 2 persons).

Table 5

Effect of Newspaper Subscribing
(Percent who are Newspaper Subscribers)

	Non-whites	Whites
Looked at newspaper at home as child		
Had newspaper in class	61%	68%
Didn't have newspaper in class	43%	70%
Did not have newspaper at home		
Had newspaper in class	45%	61%
Didn't have newspaper in class	27%	55%

On other variables, the results appear to vary by market. Of four surveys that took race into account, two found single copy buyers to be more often non-white than white whereas the opposite was found in the other two markets.

In one market, the predominant single copy purchasers tended to have a white collar occupation. In two markets where education was taken into account, single copy buyers in one tended to have low education (high school or less) whereas the opposite was found in the second market.

Single copy purchasers were questioned in seven markets about why they preferred to obtain their newspaper this way. In four markets, the predominant reason given was that the respondent did not have time to read the entire newspaper and was only interested in specific sections. Poor delivery service ranked first in the other three markets.

When single copy buyers were categorized into regular and irregular buyers in two markets, regular or loyal purchasers tended to cite "delivery problems" slightly more often whereas irregular buyers were more likely to cite "no time to read" or mentioned that they were only interested in looking at specific sections.

In the first market, interviews with single copy buyers showed they also tended to purchase a copy for specific sections of the newspaper (stocks, sports, features) or the occurrence of late-breaking news. Similarly, getting "a quick summary of the news" was the most frequently cited reasons by single copy buyers in a Midwestern market.

Additional data in three cities from the Newspaper Advertising Bureau study showed that two out of five single copy buyers cited dissatisfaction with home delivery service while one in four mentioned infrequent reading (not home regularly, don't want to read the newspaper everyday). In these three markets, a large proportion of single copy buyers (three of four) previously had home delivery. Among those with previous home delivery, dissatisfaction with service was mentioned by more than twice as many as those who cited infrequent reading (54 percent to 23 percent).

A research report on single copy buying by a major Northern metropolitan market from which some of these results were drawn concluded appropriately:

> "Single copy purchasing should not be regarded as the negative side of the coin from home delivery. While there is impetus on the part of some people to reject home delivery because of perceived problems with service, the basic drive to buy single copies comes from a desire to read *only on selected days* or under specific conditions that do not exist every day."

Summing Up

The results show that we have improved what we know about subscribers with the help of these various market reports. However, much more needs to be done.

There is a pattern in the data that bears further investigation. A strong interest in news and a desire to keep informed about what's going on appears to underlie subscribing. Several results suggest this.

First, subscribers clearly differ from non-subscribers in their greater use of newspapers and magazines, their greater exposure to broadcast news, especially local news, and greater interest in local, national and international news. They do not differ from non-subscribers in their general use of television or radio. Thus, it appears the news rather than the entertainment function of newspapers more clearly differentiates subscribers from non-subscribers.

Second, subscribers exhibit higher levels of political interest, knowledge and activity than non-subscribers and these activities are closely tied to keeping up with the news.

It is evident from the market data we evaluated that most newspapers still rely on the old standby—demographics—to differentiate or describe their audiences. One cannot dispute the utility of demographics, but their explanatory uses are limited. Why do some people subscribe and others don't? What brings an individual to subscribe rather than buy single copies? Some answers have been suggested by the findings, but demographics alone will not help us understand subscribing behavior.

A few markets have made important steps by looking at (a) why people cancel subscriptions; (b) single-copy buying; (c) other media use of subscribers and non-subscribers; and (d) content preferences. These variables need to be evaluated more systematically by other markets.

There is a need for more trend data. Only two or three markets have consistently looked at similar variables over time. Certainly a two-year comparison is better than data at one time point, and a comparison over five time points is better than one with two time points. The important thing is that significant patterns may emerge with data collected over several points in time.

Characteristics of the market and the newspaper also need to be more systematically analyzed. What is

the economic picture of the community, the nature of its workforce, commuting patterns, availability of other mdia? How about the newspaper itself? What type of competitive situation is it in?

Finally, we need to be able to say something about the contribution of key variables to subscribing, relative to other variables. That is, by using more sophisticated tools, such as multiple regression, we may be able to account for "how much" a given factor or variable contributes toward explaining newspaper subscribing. □

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